

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 22

Gratitude for Repentance

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

Paul had written to the Corinthians in strong terms concerning their transgressions and their tolerance of sin. He knew in writing 1 Corinthians that it would cause sorrow among these brethren, for they would have to acknowledge their sins. Yet, the truth had to be stated so they could understand the danger that threatened their eternal souls.

Thankfully, the Corinthians felt and experienced godly sorrow – recognizing that their sins were against a pure and perfect God who loved them and gave His Son for them. This sorrow moved them to repentance. The result was their forgiveness and restored salvation. Thus, Paul rejoiced – he expressed gratitude for repentance.

Like Paul, we should be thankful for brethren who repent. We should thank God that He granted them time and opportunity to grow and change. We should thank God for the power of His Word to convict and to convert. We should thank God and rejoice when one who is lost finds the way home (cf. Luke 15:7, 10, 17-24, 32).

Also, we should be grateful for the times that God has allowed us to repent. God is patient and longsuffering with His children (2 Peter 3:9). His longsuffering should lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4). And, when forgiveness is found and salvation restored, we should be thankful!

Growing Gratitude

Today, our exercise in gratitude is to write out the text of Luke 15:32. Jesus taught a powerful lesson in the story of the prodigal son. It is necessary, therefore proper, appropriate, fitting, and right, to rejoice and to give thanks when a sinner repents. We should be thankful and joyful when we repent. We should be grateful and cheerful when a sinner repents. As you write, pay close attention to the words of Luke 15:32...

“LIKEWISE, I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH” (LUKE 15:10).

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 23

Gratitude for Infirmities

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Paul had a “thorn in the flesh” that buffeted him. The Greek word for ‘buffet’ means, “To strike with the fist, to hit; thus, to maltreat or to treat with violence.” In other words, Paul suffered from a physical infirmity.

This was not something that Paul enjoyed or even wanted to be a part of his life. He prayed three times for God to remove it from him. God did not comply but gave Paul an answer to his prayer that completely changed his perspective.

God replied, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Though Paul might suffer, God’s grace was greater than his difficulty. God would take care of Paul – especially spiritually.

God also declared, “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul’s infirmity actually became a means by which God could demonstrate His strength. Paul could glorify God through his weakness and his suffering.

Thus, Paul determined that he would glory and take pleasure in his infirmities. He did not enjoy the pain or suffering but understood that God could use those things to His honor. This was the attitude of all the Apostles when they suffered persecution (Acts 5:40-42). No physical infirmity can touch the soul! Therefore, nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).

Finally, Paul related this to the death of Jesus (2 Corinthians 13:4). In His crucifixion, Jesus appeared weak (from a human perspective). Yet, through that weakness, God made known the greatness of His power by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! God’s strength is made perfect in weakness. He demonstrates His power through frail, weak, infirm men and women.

Growing Gratitude

Today, grow in gratitude by praying for your infirmities and those of others. Yet, pray that God may use them to show His power and strength. In fact, give thanks for them – not that you find pleasure in the suffering – and their ability to show others the goodness of God.

“FOR THOUGH HE WAS CRUCIFIED THROUGH WEAKNESS, YET HE LIVETH BY THE POWER OF GOD. FOR WE ALSO ARE WEAK IN HIM, BUT WE SHALL LIVE WITH HIM BY THE POWER OF GOD TOWARD YOU” (2 CORINTHIANS 13:4).

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 24

Gratitude for Comfort

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-6).

Paul honored God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He was thankful that God is a God who comforts His children in their sufferings. The word for ‘comfort’ literally refers to “a calling near.” When a person is in need of help, he calls someone to come to his side. When one is discouraged, he calls for a friend to come to his side to lift him up. When one is heartbroken or grieving, he calls for a helper to come to his side for comfort and consolation. Thus, this word for ‘comfort’ means, “Encouragement, consolation, comfort, or solace.”

This comfort comes from God through the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). Yet, the Holy Spirit comforts by the Word of God (Romans 15:4). But what a comfort it is! Paul described it as “everlasting consolation” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Paul was grateful to God for this comfort. It provided help in tribulation, trouble, sufferings, and afflictions. Thus, Paul was able to endure and continue his faithful service to God.

He was also thankful because his being comforted enabled him to comfort others. One who has passed through a great trial is able to help, comfort, and encourage others who are going through similar tests. God comforts – through His Word and, also, through His children.

“FOR WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE” (ROMANS 15:4).

Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise gratitude by thanking God for His comfort that we have received in our tests and trials. Pause to reflect upon the encouragement you have received from the Word of God and give thanks for it. Then, think of someone that is enduring a difficult situation. How can your experience in life relate to them? Is there a way that you can speak comfort into their circumstance? Share with them a passage of Scripture that has helped you. Talk to them of how you prayed during your affliction. Pray for those who are suffering, that they may be comforted.

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 25

Gratitude for Victory over Sin

“But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life...” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16 – ASV).

Paul paints a picture of Jesus leading His disciples in a victory procession that becomes a message of truth and hope to the world. In the Roman army, a mighty commander would lead his soldiers into battle. After victory was won, he would return home in a triumphant parade before the citizens of his community. To demonstrate his power in battle, he would lead the procession, followed by those he had conquered and captured in the fight. Some of them were political captives who were being taken to their executions. Others were to be shown mercy and granted freedom.

Paul was grateful that Jesus always leads his followers in triumph. He went to battle against Satan and defeated him. We, who had been slaves of the devil, are now free from sin as servants of Christ. He is the conquering hero, and we follow in His procession. He is leading us to eternal life!

Those who reject Him are “dead men walking” – headed toward their judgment and eternal death. Those under the wrath of God carry upon themselves the odor of death. On the other hand, the child of God carries the sweet smell of life. Victory over sin grants salvation, freedom, and life.

Like Paul, we should be thankful for our victory in Jesus. We should show our gratitude by giving thanks to God in our prayers, our worship, and our lives. We must become a “sweet savor of Christ” unto the world. We should live in such a way that we demonstrate to others the joy of being a Christian, the peace of forgiveness of sin, and the hope of eternal life in Heaven.

Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow in gratitude through song. “Onward, Christian Soldiers” was written by Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865. Pay close attention to the lyrics of the second verse: “At the sign of triumph Satan’s host doth flee; On, then, Christian soldiers, On to victory! Hell’s foundations quiver At the shout of praise; Brothers, lift your voices, Loud your anthems raise!” God “always causeth us to triumph in Christ!” Let us go forth assured of our victory over Satan and his plans and forces of evil. Sing this song and give thanks to God for our victory over sin!

<https://youtu.be/RpYdRvgsaQA>

“FOR WHATSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD OVERCOMETH THE WORLD: AND THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH” (1 JOHN 5:4).

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 26

Gratitude for the Grace of God

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:3-7).

Paul listed so many blessings in this passage that it is almost beyond man’s ability to comprehend. All of them are gifts of God’s grace. Truly, “the riches of His grace” are extraordinary!

Grace is when man receives that which he does not deserve. Paul was abundantly grateful for the grace of God. He realized that without it, he would have nothing and be nothing. Thus, he offered praise and honor to God for the abundant grace given through Jesus. Like Paul, we must be thankful for the amazing grace of God.

“THAT IN THE AGES TO COME HE MIGHT SHOW THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD US THROUGH CHRIST JESUS” (EPHESIANS 2:7).

Growing Gratitude

Today, count your many blessings. We often sing of counting our blessings, but how often do we actually count them? Take some time today and write down some of the things that God has blessed you with. You’ll soon run out of paper, but your heart will be focused on God’s goodness. As a result, it will encourage you to grow in gratitude. That is something we all should do!

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Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 27

Gratitude for the Church

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14-21).

Paul expressed gratitude for many things in this passage, but it begins and ends with the church. The church is the family of God. It wears the name of its Savior and Head, Jesus Christ. It is where God is glorified through Jesus until the end of time. It is essential to God and man. It demands the Christian’s gratitude to God.

Paul’s prayer was a petition that the Ephesians would be strengthened, rooted, grounded, and knowledgeable in truth, faith, and love. All of these things were to be found in the church. Thus, in his petition there was also gratitude – thanksgiving for God’s abundant power toward His family, the church.

Let us never underestimate the value of the Lord’s church. We should be thankful that God brought it into existence and revealed how we could be members of it. We should express gratitude for all that the church is and provides for us. We should strive to make it exactly as God planned and purposed for it to be. Give thanks for the Lord’s church.

“TO THE INTENT THAT NOW UNTO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES MIGHT BE KNOWN BY THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD, ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL PURPOSE WHICH HE PURPOSED IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD” (EPHESIANS 3:10-11).

Growing Gratitude

Today, pray for the church. In your prayers, give thanks for the church. Read the book of Ephesians and focus on Paul’s teaching about the importance of the church. Then, ask yourself what you can do to make the church what it should be. Commit to serving, giving, and living in a way that will strengthen the church. Be grateful for the privilege of being a member of the Lord’s church.